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The lived experience of the Western Australian graduate registered nurse who is male

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Chapter 3. Methodology

As previously stated, the aim of this study was to explore the Western Australian GRNMs lived experience. Moreover, the study sought to investigate and make sense of how these GRNMs perceived their own experiences. This was done by providing detailed interpretations of the understandings derived from the constructive dialogues between the GRNMs and myself as the researcher to extract the participants' experiential meanings. At the same time acknowledgment was given to the importance of capturing the individual GRNM's uniqueness that each of them bring to the phenomena under investigation; namely, his lived experience.

The mode of inquiry for this study used the language of human science. Human science language being an extension of social science with the Heideggerian stance of 'being in the world' through human encounter (Rolfe, 2015). As this study was to investigate a deeper understanding of the GRNMs lived experience, their human encounter, and their motivation for entering nursing; the focus on 'being in the world' was deemed apt for this project. Moreover, in discovering the main themes associated with the GRNMs human encounters through their lived experience, the ability of these themes in relation their translation into the professional practice of nursing, now with the mantra of the holistic nursing approach; gave authority for the use of qualitative phenomenological research from a hermeneutic field with a focus on the particular. In this case, the particular was the individual GRNM.

The sections within this chapter follows Figure 6: Methodology flow chart. This chart was developed as a guide to the flow of information provided to aid in the comprehension of why the specific research strategy and design was used; the specific methods employed in the study; the way rigour and quality of the study; ethical considerations are addressed; and the limitations of this study.

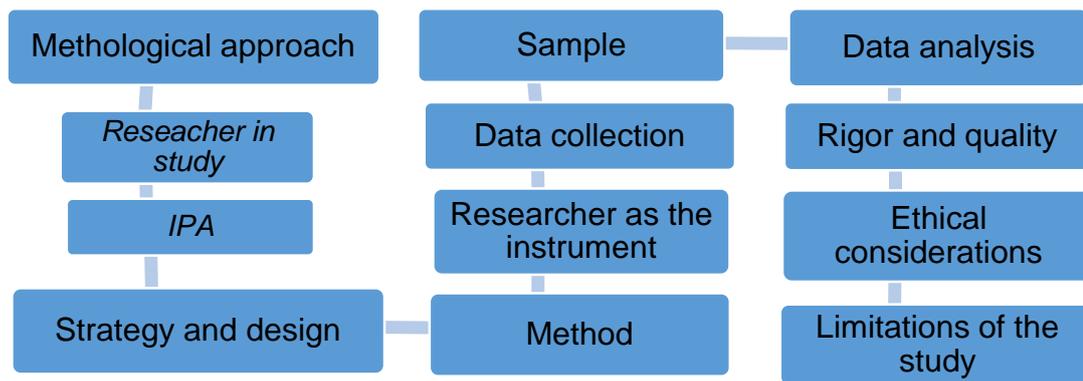


Figure 6 Methodology flow chart

3.1 Methodological approach

The methodological approach was grounded in the social science research field and with social science being the science of people and their individual or collective behaviours (Bhattacharjee, 2012), lent itself to qualitative research. Qualitative research encased the “assumptions and uses interpretative / theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). Moreover, phenomenology focused on human understanding of what they experience and originated from the work of the philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1936) where he expounded the importance of the ‘lived experience’ with the belief in core meaning of entities through understanding intuition (Fade, 2004). Husserl centred on arriving at an understanding and meaning of human experience and consciousness, thus facilitated the essence of the phenomena in the process of investigation of the experience (Dowling, 2007). Capturing this essence and remaining outside the experience, in other words “looking beyond preconceptions became known by various interchangeable terms: phenomenological reduction, epoche or bracketing” (Tufford & Newman, 2012, p. 82).

Qualitative interpretative phenomenology was used for this study. Interpretative phenomenology was based on the theoretical underpinnings of Heidegger, a student of Edmund Husserl, where he sees “human existence as interpretative” (Moran, 2000, p. 235). Heidegger proposed that “all knowledge emanates from people who are already in the world and seeking to understand other people who are already in the world” (Corney, 2008, p. 165). Contrary to Husserl’s remaining outside the experience, Heidegger adopted ontology, ‘the science of being’, with the premise of

being in the world rather than knowing the world (Reiners, 2012), where interpretation and meaning are embedded in everyday activities (Cerbone, 2006). Heidegger insisted that bracketing out preconceptions was not possible in an interpretative process (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

3.1.1 Researcher's position in the study

Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology promoted the researcher as an integral part of the field being studied as a 'common being' with the participants, therefore the researcher cannot negate her prior understanding in the subject under study (Reiners, 2012). As previously mentioned, Heidegger believed that the putting aside of the researcher's own experience by bracketing is not fully achievable (Finlay, 2008). Further, "the researcher's involvement including preconceptions, beliefs and aims prior to the analysis stage of the research proceedings is generally acknowledged" (Brocki & Wearden, 2006, p. 91). However, "a focus on researcher's characteristics may not necessarily benefit reader's interpretations of an analysis and might perhaps even represent a misleading diversion" (p. 92). Moreover, Sorsa and colleagues (2015) cautioned the researcher that their background should not influence the participants' understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher's curiosity, often the instigator for investigating the phenomenon, led LeVasseur (2003) to suggest that curiosity about the phenomenon may be seen as a form of bracketing.

The use of bracketing remained a contentious issue, therefore, to aid the researcher in noting details such as the nature and origin of emergent interpretations a reflexive journal was recommended (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). Reflexive journaling enabled acknowledgment of assumptions and reflexive assessment on interpretations during the researcher's making sense of the participants' experiences that was congruent with interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009).

3.1.2 Interpretative phenomenological analysis

The Heideggerian stance supported the use of the IPA due to its research approach where it aimed to qualitatively explore individuals' perceptions and experiences through the interpretive stance of the researcher (Finlay, 2008). IPA provided both a theoretically informed framework on how to conduct the research and a technique for

analysing data (Smith et al., 2009). It focused on the individual's ability to express their thoughts and experiences through self-reflection in order to interpret their experiences that is understandable to them (Silverman, 2011). Thus it was envisaged that this interpretive approach would lend itself to eliciting the understanding of the Western Australian GRNMs lived experiences with the aim to illuminate the essence and make sense of their being there in this world.

3.2 Strategy and design

The strategy used was a longitudinal qualitative research approach to enable qualitative explorations about the GRNMs lived experiences as these occurred at designated time points during their transitional year. Moreover, to elicit the causes and consequences that focused on their narratives and their journey in order to capture significant moments involved in their transition (Calman, Brunton, & Molassiotis, 2013). It is acknowledged that

the analysis is complex and multidimensional . . . tackled both cross-sectionally at each time point to allow analysis between individuals at the same time as well as longitudinally capturing each individual's narrative . . . the addition of a theoretical framework can help to guide researchers during analysis to move beyond description (p. 2).

IPA was selected as the research design to understand how these GRNMs' make sense of their lived experience as they journeyed into and through their first year in the female dominant nursing profession. Phenomenological from the aspect of pursuing an insider viewpoint of the individual's lived experience; interpretative by considering the researcher and the individual's perspectives in making sense of his lived experience; and idiographic as IPA focuses on the particular, in this instance, the individual GRNM.

From the IPA's interpretative facet, the 'making sense of' the lived experience was through the participant's and the researcher's interpretative analyses taking into account the context (social, cultural and theoretical) in the process of the analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). This interpretative activity was termed the 'double hermeneutic', in other words, the researcher is trying to make sense of the GRNM, who is making sense of himself (Smith et al., 2009, p. 35).

The idiographic facet of IPA fostered the detailed analysis of each GRNM's data before moving onto the next, in order to give importance 'prioritise' each individual data set before undertaking convergence and divergence across the data sets (Larkin, Eatough, & Osborn, 2011). This analysis, as an iterative and inductive cycle, moved from the individual's experience to the shared experiences, and from the descriptive to the interpretative whilst staying true to the individual's personal meaning-making in particular contexts (Smith et al., 2009, p. 79).

In this study, the idiographic aspect was maintained by the use of research questions using the verb 'explore' inference on how do the GRNM choose nursing as a career, how do they perceive their professional practice experiences and how do they place themselves in terms of a future career pathway; and by focusing on the 'understandings' and 'experiences' of the individual participant's perception of his personal experience (Giorgi, 2012). Although, not all the questions are known prior to the commencement of the data collection (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). This was in keeping with the IPA where maintenance of flexibility and avoidance of preconceived directional questions with the tendency to influence the analysis was promoted (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). These questions are also inductive as they are broadly presented to encourage unanticipated themes to materialise.

3.3 Method

Western Australian GRNMs who were about to commence employment in the metropolitan area were invited to participate in this qualitative longitudinal study. Having contact, in this case via the telephone, with the potential participants prior to the interviews was central in the recruitment process in setting the cornerstone for rapport and relationship building between the researcher and the participants (Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). Meeting the participants more than once further augmented the relationship building and enhanced the richness of data that evolved. Moreover, multiple meetings provided the opportunity for further exploration, investigation and clarification of matters that surfaced in previous contacts. Furthermore, the study's in-depth three-phase longitudinal approach enabled the investigation of the participant's lived experiences at specified times post-graduation that has been identified previously by researchers, such as Judy Duchscher (2008), at significant points within the GRNs graduate year. These significant points identified

by Duchscher (2008) were the 'doing stage' from commencement of the graduate year up to the fourth month where the impact of transition shock is common; the 'being stage' from five months up to the eighth month with the emergence of transition crisis; and then the 'knowing stage' from around the eighth month up to the completion of the first graduate year. This focus of what is happening at a particular time for an individual participant has congruency with Heidegger's 'Being-there' or 'Dasein' (Smith et al., 2009).

The semi-structured design allowed the same open-ended questions and flexible probes to be used in each interview to elicit the individual's narratives about his experiences of the phenomenon under investigation (Trautrim, Grant, Cunliffe, & Wong, 2012). Interview transcription straight after participant contact elicited the real time thoughts, feelings, ideas and concepts of both the researcher and the participant relevant at the specific phase.

Data analysis occurred simultaneously and iteratively with the data collection process (Silverman, 2011). Moreover, it was linguistically focused on what the participants said "in order to learn about how they are making sense of their experience" (Smith, 2011, p. 10). Based on data interpretation and in order to investigate fully the GRNM lived experience, the IPA method outlined by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) was followed. The method commenced with multiple reading and making notes before transforming notes into emergent themes, followed by seeking relationships and clustering themes, and then producing a narrative account of the study from the analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Moreover, following the IPA analytical "procedures for moving from single case to more general statements, but still allow one to retrieve particular claims for any of the individuals involved" (Smith et al., 2009, p 32).

3.4 Sample

In keeping with IPA methodology, a purposeful sampling technique was used due to the unique status of being RNMs about to commence their graduate year where their lived experience has relevance and personal significance to this study. Those selected "experienced the phenomenon in question so that the researcher, in the end, can forge a common understanding" (Creswell, 2013, p. 38). Recruitment was via

the snowballing technique where existing participants recruited future participants amongst their peers. This technique using referrals from the other participants is commonly used in IPA, particularly amongst vulnerable groups and where sensitive issues are to be researched (Smith et al., 2009).

The study was introduced at an undergraduate nursing final semester lecture where five male students who were about to embark on their RN graduate year indicated their interest in the study after being invited to participate by sharing a detailed first person account of their experiences. At this initial contact these five men knew of others who may be interested and agreed to pass on the study information (Appendix A: Information sheet) and contact details to them, thus resulting in nine GRNM study participants in total. The sample number was not rigidly pre-set nor the process of saturation applied as the number of participants was less important than the richness of the data (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Smith et al., 2009). The interpretative approach tendency is for a small participant number to produce a large amount of detailed information (O'Donoghue, 2007). Moreover, IPA is an idiographic method and focuses more on the “intensive qualitative analysis of detailed personal accounts” (Smith, 2011, p. 10), “concerned with examining divergence and convergence in smaller samples” (Brocki & Wearden, 2006, p. 94). A small sample size of up to eight participants is deemed acceptable (Smith et al., 2009), with caution noted that using a sample over eight to obtain adequate participants extract variations or density of themes can become a quality issue (Smith, 2011, p. 17). The acceptable number of eight participants was reached at the first recruitment contact as a consequence the participants came from the same university. The participants coming from the same university into study was not considered problematic due to the idiographic nature of IPA. Each participant had his own unique story of why he wanted to become a RN and each participant’s journey as a GRNM was undertaken in different health settings. This study initially recruited nine to allow for attrition of potential participants, a known risk with the application of a longitudinal design where continued engagement of the study participant is necessary (Cotter, Burke, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Loeber, 2005).

3.5 Data collection

For the purpose of both confidentiality and for data collection, the participants' identities were protected using numerical identifiers for the transcription and analysis of the interviews and their diaries. For example the first interviewed participant was identified as P1, then added numerical codes of P1 for Phase one, P2 for Phase two and P3 for Phase three. For example P1 P2 represents participant one Phase two. In the findings and discussions to maintain anonymity of the participants and to add a human element when using their quotes, the numerical identifiers are replaced with pseudonyms, such as Wes for P1, Connor for P2 and so on.

The preferred IPA method of semi-structured in-depth face-to-face interviews using guiding research questions (Smith et al., 2009) and participants' diaries at specified contact phases were the primary means of data collection. In-depth interviews, informal and conversational, were used to draw on an interpretative focus with the meanings being continually constructed and reconstructed in the interactions (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). The iterative practice began in the early stages of data collection with the repeated returns back to the data to check for meanings and continued throughout this collection process.

The use of guiding research questions allowed for multiplicity of findings to emerge (Creswell, 2014). A interview schedule of guiding questions aided the flexible flow of the discussions at the interviews and guided the participants' narratives (Harris & Brown, 2010), from a general stance to a more specified experiential basis that included thoughts and feelings (Smith et al., 2009, p. 68). Moreover, enabled engaging flexible dialogue between the researcher and participant to accommodate unanticipated notions to materialise during the interviews (Shinebourne & Smith, 2011). Refer to Appendix B: Contact schedule and interview guiding questions.

Each participant attended multiple individual face-to-face interviews at a participant preferred place of his choosing over the twelve month period following his commencement as a newly GRNM. This interview multiplicity enabled the participant to reflect on his journey over time that afforded additional insights on his lived experiences and enabled validation of emerging themes at subsequent interviews. In addition, using more than one method of data collection more than

once with each participant, three interviews combined with two diary entries, provided comparison with this study's aforementioned conceptual framework and existent literature. Thus enabled completeness of data through enhancement in findings by the use of the multiple methods that also minimalised potential systematic bias that can occur in a single method approach (Antin, Constantine, & Hunt, 2014).

The semi-structured format enabled questions to be modified in accordance to the participant responses in order to probe areas of interest or importance. Moreover, the probing questions provided the opportunity for the participants in their own words to "tell their stories, to speak freely and reflectively" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 56).

The participant diaries were utilised to enhance dialogue between the participants and the researcher by providing the opportunity for the participants' to write their GRN journey immediately after each worked shift to capture their nursing activity and thoughts relevant to them at that time. Refer to Appendix C: Electronic reflective diary instructions given to each participant at his first face-face interview as a guideline. The participants diarised on the two occasions over five consecutive days, at the sixteen weeks (fourth month) and thirty-two weeks (eighth month) stage of their graduate year in between the face-to-face contacts, to further uncover unprompted and unexpected thoughts and experiences to surface. This unprompted and unanticipated data, according to Smith and colleagues (2009) "are often the most valuable aspects of interviewing" (p. 58). The diary writing of five days, on shift as a GRNM, was deemed sufficient to gather the relevant data required (Punch, 2006). The rationale for the diarising timeframe was that it reflected the GRN's transition from 'doing' to the commencement of the 'being' stage (fourth month) and the 'being' to the commencement of the 'knowing' stage (eighth month) in accordance to the transition stages model of Duchscher (2007). It was during these transition points, that the GRNs questioned self's professional identity and had crisis in their confidence as they entered the 'being' stage, and then sought out of challenges and their long term career planning surfaced around the middle of the knowing stage (Duchscher, 2008).

A follow up contact with each participant via his preferred method either via an email or a telephone call occurred at the sixteen-month conclusion of the study.

Figure 7 provides a visual presentation of the aforementioned data collection methods aligned with the relevant the phase in which they were conducted.

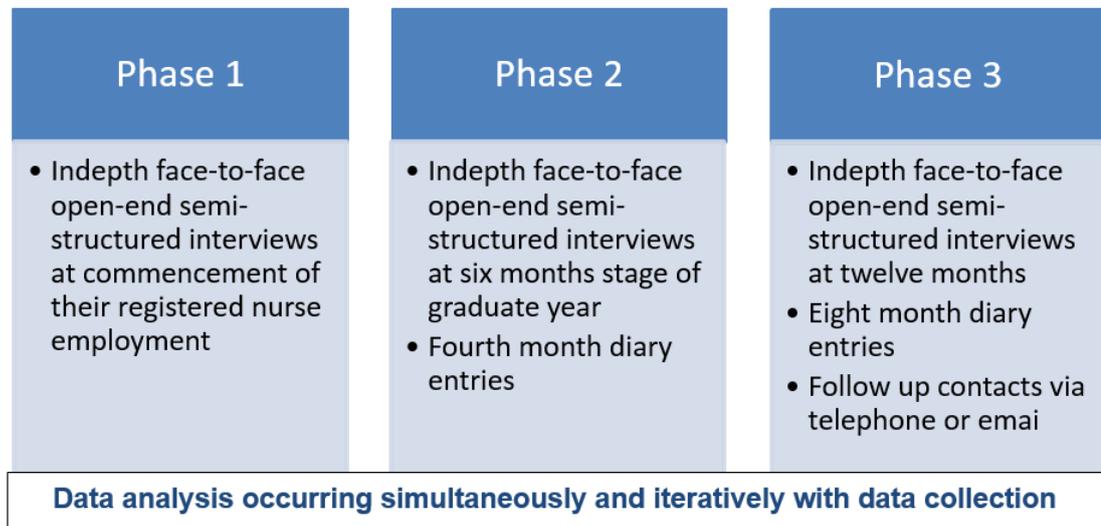


Figure 7 Qualitative data collection and analysis plan

All interviews were digitally recorded with permission from the participants, and then listened to closely numerous times whilst transcribing verbatim to ensure transcription accuracy, plus noting the tones, speed and pauses in the participants' voices and any significant points that surfaced. The notes included questions on the participants' viewpoints, their thoughts and beliefs that needed further exploration and clarification at their next contact. QSR NVivo 11 was used in this study to assist with data management. The notes and the researcher's journal entries were kept with the interviews within the QSR NVivo 11.

3.6 Researcher as the research instrument

According to Creswell (2013), "the researcher as the key instrument collects the data through examining documents, observing behaviour, and interviewing participants using open-ended questions . . . and does not tend to use or rely on questions or instruments developed by other researchers" (p. 45). As the research instrument tasked to elicit rich detailed personal accounts of the participant's lived experience, the researcher was entrusted with systematic data collecting, skilful interview techniques, and undertook rigorous data analysis by being fully immersed in the data (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Thus transforming the analysed data into emergent themes and related sub themes whilst retaining the participant's voice to enable the reader to assess the relevance of resultant interpretations (p. 368).

For cognisance of positionality within this study, the researcher's journal focused on reflexivity where self-monitoring of preconceptions, personal values and beliefs were acknowledged for transparency and to minimalise their potential influence on the research (Rodham, Fox, & Doran, 2015). In addition, the journal captured the interpretation of the data collected to support the documentation of new questions, notation of known literature related to a specific area of data, and the reflect on the "conceptualization relationship of the codes and processes used" (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 274). Moreover, "the researcher's reflective engagement in dialogue with participant's narratives and meanings" was paramount (Shinebourne & Smith, 2011, p. 57). Paramount in this sense due to IPA's double hermeneutic stance where "the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 3). The researcher's journal was located in the memo section of the QSR NVivo 11. According to Vicary, Young and Hicks (2016) "using a journal inside the software package and alongside the stages of the IPA . . . quality and validity becomes dynamic, not static constructs" (p. 1).

3.7 Data analysis

There was no finite process for conducting the data analysis for IPA (Smith et al., 2009). Although IPA's idiographic stance required transcripts to be analysed in detail case-by-case before cross-analysis occurred. The focus being on "the balance of convergence and divergence within the sample" to ensure common themes and the 'particular' individual themes were represented (Smith, 2011, p. 10).

Throughout the data collection phases, the importance of the participant to take the lead during the conversation was emphasised (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). In addition, the development of questions from the data obtained straight after each interview to form new or further probing questions for the next contact with the individual participant was essential. These questions evolved from the notation of thoughts, feelings, main areas of concerns and any ambiguities or contradictory ideas of both the participant and the researcher. This information was documented in memos and the researcher's journal associated with the relevant transcript and were inclusive of any interpretative challenges.

For this study, the analysis process was sectioned into the individual level followed by the group level approach used recently by Callary, Rathwell and Young (2015) with alignment to Smith et al. (2009) steps in the IPA data analysis process. Visual interpretation of this process for each longitudinal phase with participants (p) data is presented in Figure 8 with the three phases portrayed in Figure 9.

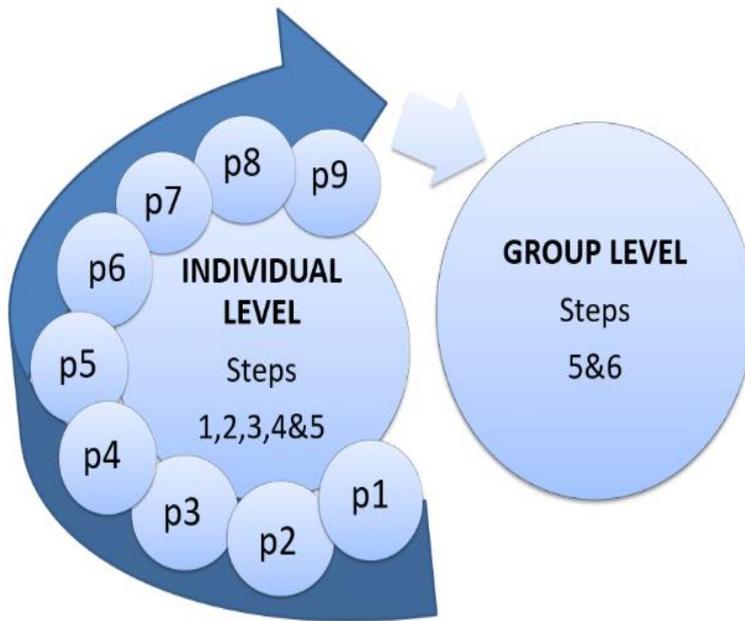


Figure 8 Data analysis process for each phase
p = participants

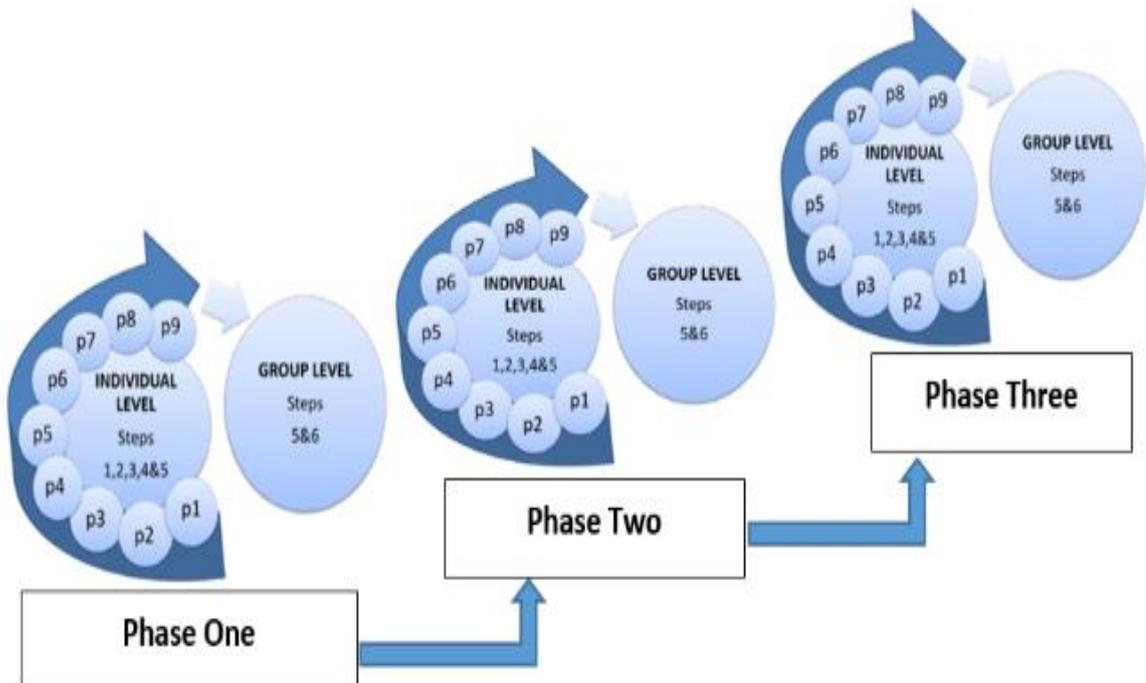


Figure 9 Three phases in the analysis process
p = participants

3.7.1 The way data was processed

The data was collected at the face-to-face interviews in Phase one on commencement of their graduate year, in Phase two at six months into their graduate year and in Phase three on completion of their graduate year; along with the data obtained in participants' diaries at the fourth month and eighth month stages of their graduate year. The follow up contact, via email, four months post completion of their graduate year was undertaken to obtain the final member check feedback on the study as a whole, and to enquire where the GRNMs were at in regards to their career progression.

A step-by-step approach was used to order to obtain an in-depth understanding with the participant's account and enhance interpretation of the data (Smith et al., 2009). Data analysis process Figure 10, utilised Callary, Rathwell and Young's (2015) sequence approach headings and aligned these with Smith et al.'s (2009, pp. 82-107) six steps in the IPA data analysis.

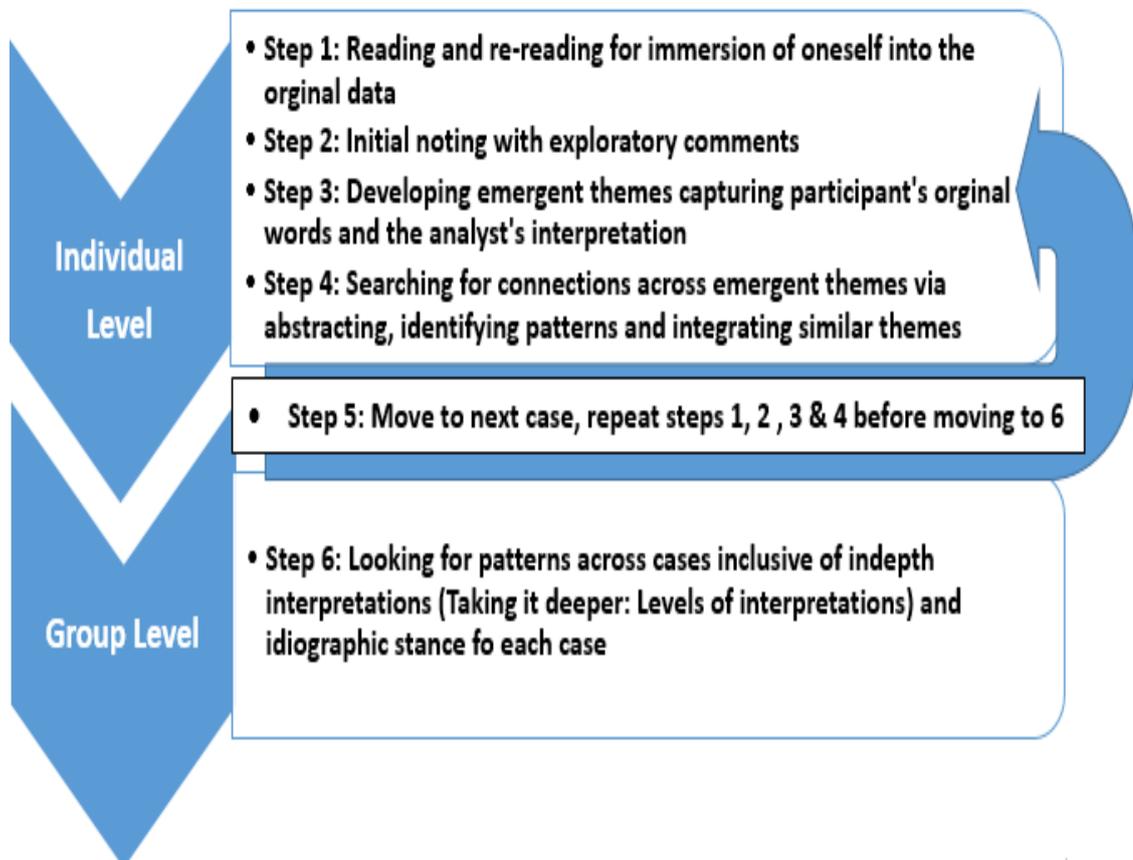


Figure 10 Data analysis

3.7.1.1 Individual level

The multiple steps within this level were required in order to meet the idiographic nature of the research design. This utilised a ‘ground up’ approach whereby notes were made from the individual participant’s data (case) before the generation of themes for this case. Comments related to the researcher’s personal reflexivity were also captured in the researcher’s journal throughout the data analysis. The analysis moved from “the descriptive to the interpretative by capturing initial thoughts, generating tentative themes, and the refining these themes . . . proceeds from exploratory comments to emergent themes to super-ordinate themes for each participant” (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015, p. 345). Following the personal transcription of the digitally recorded interviews that commenced the process of in-depth familiarity of the data, the following steps were undertaken:

Step 1: This consisted of reading the first participant’s transcript (text) as a whole to get a general sense of the participant’s account that enabled reflecting on the overall meaning of his ‘lived experience’. Then reading and re-reading the text several times more closely thereafter, even re-listening to the digital recording to become fully immersed in the data.

Step 2: Data immersion was undertaken that aided in the detailed investigation of the participant’s text by interrogation of the data line-by-line to develop initial notes with exploratory comments (exploratory notes) that were participant-orientated. Participant-orientated inasmuch as these initial notes were encased descriptively, the participant’s account; linguistically, how the participant verbally and expressively communicated meaning within his account; and conceptual with the linkage to existent literature and theoretical views.

Step 3: The emergent themes were identified and labelled through working primarily from the exploratory notes developed in the previous step, and by being interpretatively focused on “discrete chunks of transcript . . . mapping the interrelationships, connections and patterns between the exploratory notes” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 91). Using a cyclical process, each theme was related back and linked to quotes in text; thus followed the IPA’s idiographic nature by developing each stage of the analysis for each theme before moving to the next. Throughout this process, care was taken to ensure that the linkage between the interpretations derived and the

participant's voice was maintained by being mindful to stay close to the data when developing of emerging themes from the actual data; thus to enhance the focus on the unique characteristics of each individual participant (Smith et al., 2009).

Step 4: Investigation of the separate emergent themes was undertaken to obtain the conceptual connections to enable the clustering of related themes into super-ordinate themes. The activity necessitated the “grouping and regrouping the emergent themes for an individual participant to identify and organize connections between the themes” (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015, p. 346). This required a more comprehensive examination of the text for greater in-depth meaning and interpretation from the participant's aspect with consideration of theoretical knowledge in order to provide a conceptual and descriptive labelling to the clustered themes. This was done by working continuously, moving back and forth, between the themes for abstraction. This abstraction, according to Smith and colleagues (2009) “is a basic form of identifying patterns between emergent themes and developing a sense of what can be called a ‘super-ordinate’ theme” (p. 96).

A table of super-ordinate themes for the participant was developed that included each super-ordinate theme with its relevant sub-ordinate themes, and key narrative text (quotes) that provided evidence for each theme (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2011; VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015). Narrative text was included as “IPA promotes what the participants are actually saying with direct quotes being used widely to substantiate findings” (Pringle et al., 2011, p. 21). Moreover, the ideographic element of IPA ensured the table of super-ordinate themes notated the shared and divergent aspects of the GRMNs making sense of their experiences. In-depth discussions with the researcher's two supervisors followed after the supervisors had completely read, coded and inductive themed the first transcript in each phase independently. The comparing and contrasting the results produced an agreement on the themes. Again, following Callary and colleagues (2015) lead:

The researcher and supervisors read the remaining transcripts . . . immersed themselves in the data, but only one (the researcher) performed a line-by-line analysis of the data to code for inductive [emergent] themes for lived experiences. Co-researchers (the supervisors) reviewed the themes and supporting codes and provided feedback, often raising ideas for alternate themes . . . resolved any disagreements by a consensus decision (p. 69).

These discussions also provided the evaluation of the analysis process undertaken. Further, these discussions with the resultant frequent contacts provided an avenue for brainstorming and refining the researcher's interpretation of the participants' interpreting their lived experiences and the meaning derived from these.

In relation to data management, the QSR NVivo 11 computer qualitative software program was used as it enhanced the coding process of the data obtained from the participants' diaries and the interviews conducted. Education and training in the use of QSR NVivo 11 was undertaken prior to commencing the data analysis. To maintain the IPA process the NVivo annotation function provided an the initial coding in the left hand column thus developing nodes (codes) for detailed coding in the right hand column; with journaling undertaken through the memo function allowing linkages to a source and designated nodes (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The emergent themes were colour coded that enabled clustering of these themes into super-ordinate themes.

Step 5: This step occurred once a full analysis of the previous case was completed. Steps 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the data analysis process were repeated for subsequent cases until all cases had been completely analysed before moving onto step 6, the group level analysis.

3.7.1.2 Group level

The researcher undertook this group level analysis and then further discussions with the supervisors occurred. Discussions focused on gaining "the agreement on the names and operational definitions of the themes and how sub-themes fit under the higher-order themes" (Callary et al., 2015, p. 69).

Step 6: Master themes for the group involved formulation of a master table from the syntheses, and then integration of the individual participant's super-ordinate themes in their summary tables. This activity was undertaken with "careful examination of similarities and differences across cases to produce detailed accounts of patterns of meaning and reflections on shared experiences" (Shinebourne & Smith, 2011, p. 49). Again this process was iterative with the requirement to repeatedly return to the data and review each participant's summary table with the relevant text to check meanings during the formation of the master list (Shinebourne & Smith, 2011). Thus

the process was a constant comparison within and across cases for patterns and connections that made sense of the data, resultant super-ordinate themes that highlighted higher order qualities, inclusive of the uniqueness for each participant and the overall common group themes, being established. In relation to the overall common group themes, recurrent themes were highlighted. The criteria set for the recurrent themes was guided by Smith and colleagues (2009) in that “to be classified as recurrent it must be present in at least a third, or a half, or, most stringently, in all the participant interviews (p. 107). NVivo’s Node Summary Report provided the prevalence and density of themes evidenced by each theme notated with the number of quotes used and the number of quoted participants.

Of note, Smith et al (2009) had noted that “as there is not a clear-cut distinction between analysis and writing up . . . as one begins to write, some themes loom large, others fade so this changes the report” (p.110). Therefore in reality, the data analysis continued throughout the detailed, interpretative, and reflexive written account undertaken for each phase of this longitudinal study. Thus some of the themes were adjusted and reallocated to another or new super-ordinate theme.

3.8 Rigour and quality of the study

To meet rigour of this qualitative study Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) trustworthiness criteria of credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Baillie, 2015) with the accepted rigor techniques (Cope, 2014; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Polit & Beck, 2010; Ryan-Nicholls & Will, 2009) were applied. Refer to Appendix D: Trustworthiness criteria linkage to examples of the techniques used. The study’s quality was assessed by using Yardley’s (2000) principles of sensitivity to context, commitment and rigor, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance (Smith et al., 2009).

At the completion of each phase of the study a summary of the individual interview was emailed to the relevant participant for member checking. This member checking formed the assessment for credibility and validity of the interpretations that focused on verification of the accurate account of the participants’ experiences and as such enhanced the trustworthiness of the study (Creswell, 2013). This member checking of the written interview summary post the face-to-face interviews acknowledged the

participants as the experts in this phenomenon under investigation (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2009). All participants were offered the opportunity to read their own full interview transcripts. This opportunity was not taken up by any of the participants' as the emailed summary of their interview was deemed sufficient. Feedback via email was encouraged as it has been noted that written summaries provided at the interviews limited exchange of ideas (Kornbluh, 2015). Hence, to increase this feedback the summaries were emailed out two weeks prior to the forthcoming face-to-face interviews. This enabled both parties the opportunity to discuss areas of interest, clarification of themes elicited or to add information before commencing the digital recording of the next interview at this contact. No changes were requested as a result of the verbal feedback received. Peer review by the researcher's two supervisors provided the external check of the themes and the research process (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Authenticity and confirmability were established by ensuring that the reporting of interpretations and emerging themes included participants' quotes to enable the reader to gain the essence of the participants' experiences (Cope, 2014). Analytic decisions to enable assessment of the authenticity, credibility and validity of the interpretations was maintained via an audit trail (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Contents of audit included interview transcripts, summary reports of the three phases, data analysis and research process included in this thesis and a reflexivity journal (Ryan-Nicholls & Will, 2009). A reflexivity journal enabled the researcher to notate thoughts and feelings to highlight perceptions and subjectivity to avoid biases and factors that had the potential to affect the research process (Polit & Beck, 2008). These thoughts, etc., augmented modifications to the researcher's interviewing techniques and kept a check on the research process to ensure it was the lived experiences of the participants that were at the forefront of this study. The participants' face-to-face interviews and their diaries also provided reflexivity where they engaged in reflection of their graduate journey at specific times (Enosh & Ben-Ari, 2015). These reflexivity techniques supported trustworthiness in the credibility of the data, dependability of the study, and conformability of findings (Houghton et al., 2013).

In accordance with Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, pp. 180-181) sensitivity to context for this study occurred via the purposeful sample of participants who were deemed experts in the phenomena under investigation; the researcher's full emersion

in the data to elicit in depth interpretations of their lived experience; quoting the participants in order for the reader to concur with the interpretations put forward; and the inclusion of substantive and theoretical literature. Commitment and rigor was ensured by the researcher's personal commitment to portraying the participants' actual experiences captured through high quality in-depth interviewing and meticulousness systematic data analysis to enable interpretive (idiographic) assignation (p. 181). Transparency and coherence was established through the provision of a clear description of all stages of the research process that remained cognisant with the IPA interpretative emphasis (p. 182). The impact and importance aspect of this study was highlighted and with all being considered was thought to be of interest to the reader (p. 183).

3.9 Ethical considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC, 2015) Australian code for the responsible conduct of research. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Notre Dame Australia, Human Research Ethics Committee (Appendix E: Ethics approval). Ethical considerations for the study were outlined in the informed consent form (Appendix F) and the information sheet (Appendix A) that included the voluntary participation, study process, withdrawal from the study and data storage information. Throughout the research process re-establishment of the consent and reiteration that the participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time occurred verbally prior to each interview in case unforeseen changes happen (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999).

With the small sample size and in-depth descriptors involved in obtaining the meaning of the participants' lived experiences, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity was the key focus due to the nature of this qualitative research. The study information, as previously stated, the participants' names and all data were de-identified by using pseudonyms and numerical identifiers. The only place that contained participants' correct names was on the participants contact details and schedule list that only the researcher had access to via a password protected computer file. The digital recordings were de-identified with the use of the numerical identifiers and pseudonyms that the supervisors had access to in order to

fulfil the credibility of findings component in qualitative research rigor. This access to the digital recordings became vital when collectively, the researcher and the supervisors, explored the analytical trustworthiness and engaged in the process of reaching consensus on themes. All participants were aware of this situation, explained as being part of the research methods, and gave permission in this instance. The use of these pseudonyms and numerical identifiers enabled confidentiality of all data and ensured that it could not be traced back to its original source. Further, the use of pseudonyms heightened the human element of the individual's experiences for the reader and enabled a trail for each participant as they transverse their graduate year. Any identifying information such as identifying names within quotes or employment institutions were not included in any published materials. However, due to the idiographic nature of the study with the importance placed on giving voice to the individual and portraying the uniqueness that each participant brings to the study, some quotes used may be recognised by the relevant participant. All participants were in agreement in using such quotes as they felt it was doubtful that others would know the original source; however, it was not seen as an issue if it did occur. Member checking throughout the research process, although used more for accuracy of participants account, assisted in this area by giving the opportunity for discussions with the relevant participant on any likelihood of specific information been identified.

All hard copy study information was secured in a locked cabinet within the School of Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Notre Dame, Australia (Fremantle campus). The data was transcribed from digitally recorded interviews and stored electronically, and password protected on a designated computer hard drive. Once the digitally recorded data was transcribed, this data was deleted. The electronic data was also stored in a password protected digital file maintained in a secure location. The study data files will be destroyed in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's 2007 (Updated May 2015) Australian code for the responsible conduct of research guidelines in five years.

3.10 Limitations of the study

Due to idiographic nature of the IPA, there was no claim that the findings be generalised to the wider population of NMs beyond the participants of this study. As

previously stated, the small sample size was appropriate for the IPA process (Brocki & Wearden, 2006), with ‘authenticity’ of experience rather than the sample size being the focus in qualitative research (Silverman, 2011, p. 48). Participants who agreed to participate after receiving information about this study came from the same university may be seen as a limitation. However, volunteering indicated participant willingness to share their lived experiences; thus potentially provided rich data that fulfilled the aim of this study in gaining an insight into the participating Western Australian GRNMs lived experiences as they transitioned into the professional practice environment.

A noted limitation was the selection of participants who are employed in the Western Australian metropolitan health area only. The decision to exclude GRNMs employed in the rural and remote areas of Western Australia was based on the manageability and affordability; in relation to the time and distance of 2,529,875 square kilometres of Western Australia and cost constraints of the research project involved with multiple face-to-face contacts. Face-to-face contact was seen as the optimum interview medium when conducting IPA to enhance rapport, facilitate empathy and promote conversational flow in order to obtain rich data (Smith et al., 2009). Although, as the researcher I was aware that the gender difference between myself as a female interviewer and male participants in the face-to-face interviews may have negated the participants’ readiness to explore sensitive issues. In order to address this, the use of two different data collection methods, participant dairies and interviews with multiple contacts with each participant, was employed to enhance the engagement and researcher participant relationship. It was also pointed out to the participants that as GRNMs they were the experiential experts of their lived experience being explored; and as the males in female-dominated profession their voice was deemed valuable to gain insight on the sensitive issues that challenge them.

3.11 Summation

My desire was to undertake qualitative research and to be accepted that I would become part of the research process. However, I was unsure of this whole concept when focusing on the hermeneutic aspect of the lived experience. Knowing the importance of the hermeneutic cycle in order to fully understand the context of the

participants' conversations; then interpreting the meaning that required attentive listening; and remaining objective when acknowledging that inter-subjectivity is inherent, I questioned my ability to do so. Would I be able to give voice to the individual participant? Would I be able to represent the meaning behind his experience? With further reading and searching to my relief and delight I discovered IPA. IPA allowed exploration of self-reflection, both mine as the researcher and the individual participant. Thus it was deemed the best fit for investigating the participant's understanding and his meaning-making. Furthermore, IPA's framework has straightforward guidelines with a flexible and inductive approach that lent itself to the research questions in this study.

With the methodological approach established and the understanding of my position within the study I was mindful of the skills required to undertake the IPA. These skills involved the engagement of double hermeneutic and reflexivity in order for me to use my interpretations to make sense of the data collected. I was aware that my bias, beliefs and own experiences in relation to working with men in nursing may impact on this research. Hence, I employed continual reflection, journaling and self-monitoring that became very important throughout all aspects of this longitudinal study. Bracketing, moreover the use of it, was an area that required attention and after numerous readings, searches and discussions I adopted the four strategies proposed by Zenobia and colleagues (2013). Refer to Appendix D: Trustworthiness criteria linkage to examples of the techniques I used.

Curiosity about the newly GRNM and why this career path, his journey into nursing and transition through his first year post graduation was at the forefront of all activities undertaken. Specially, when I was establishing the methodological approach and processes required to gain the data sought. The responsibility and ethical stance of being a qualitative researcher and interviewer was reinforced through the preparation units undertaken as a higher degree student. Although interviewing, exploring and investigation enquiry had been major components of previous positions held, I held a quiet enthusiasm about my part in this study.

On the initial contact with the prospective participants, I checked that the prospective participants had read the study information sheet and answered any questions that the prospective participants had. I was surprised with the level of

interest the study drew, the prospective participants willingness to tell their story and the ease of the recruitment process that eventuated.

From here on in I, as the researcher, proceeded with carefulness, providing information focused more on my stance as the 'common being' with the participants. This stance was important in order to set the scene for the reader and to build rapport and trust with the participants.